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PRESS RELEASE

U.S. AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY INAUGURAL PRESS CONFERENCE

DHAKA, APRIL 21- U.S. Ambassador James F. Moriarty made the following remarks at a press conference at the ARA in Dhaka today:

(Begin Text)

আসসালামু আলাইকুম এবং সবাইকে শুভ অপরাহ্ন।

আপনাদের সবাইকে আজ এখানে দেখে আমি আনন্দিত।

This morning I presented my credentials to President Iajuddin Ahmed. This formally begins my tenure as the 13th Ambassador of the United States to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I am honored to be here, and I am grateful that I was able to present my credentials so soon after my arrival. I believe that this is a clear indication of the strength of the relationship that exists between our two countries.

I begin my assignment in Bangladesh with a great deal of enthusiasm and high hopes for Bangladesh's future. This is a critical time for Bangladesh--a country in transition in a region of the world vital to U.S. interests. As Secretary Rice said during my swearing in ceremony: "We look to increased partnership as Bangladesh takes its rightful place as a country that can help to bring stability and strength to South Asia."

The United States and Bangladesh share a keen interest in advancing what I have termed the "three D's" of our bilateral relationship. I believe that promoting democracy, ensuring development, and denying space to terrorism are the key challenges Bangladesh faces. The United States will remain a close partner to the people of Bangladesh in each of these areas.

I admire the achievements of the Bangladeshi people who fought for decades to win the right to govern themselves and control their own destiny. In many ways, Bangladesh's history reminds me of my own country's independence struggle. Bangladeshis have struggled since winning their independence 37 years ago to build a vibrant democracy, just as the United States has worked to perfect its democracy over the past 231 years. For Bangladesh, the current period

that began on January 11, 2007 represents yet another important chapter in this struggle, and provides a renewed opportunity to build a strong, tolerant, and prosperous democracy. As a friend of Bangladesh and the world's oldest democracy, the United States fully supports the Caretaker Government's efforts to restore democracy by holding free, fair, and transparent elections by the end of 2008.

At the same time, we realize that there are also important reforms underway in Bangladesh. In January 2007, the Caretaker Government embarked upon an ambitious program which has lowered corruption and reformed institutions. Much has been accomplished in a short period of time, but with less than eight months remaining in this government's tenure, there is much work that remains to be done.

In order to fulfill its mandate, the Caretaker Government needs the support of the public and private sectors, the international community and, most importantly, the Bangladeshi people. You have my commitment that the United States will stand by the people of Bangladesh as you move along the path of democratization.

Despite a wide range of challenges, Bangladesh rightly has been recognized as a development success story in recent years. Even with perennial flooding, a growing population, and persistent poverty, Bangladesh has enjoyed strong economic growth over the past decade. At present, high international commodity prices and the widespread damage caused by natural disasters have made life more difficult for the Bangladeshi people. The United States understands these concerns and we are looking at ways to help cushion these shocks and promote stability and prosperity.

The U.S. has provided roughly \$5 billion in assistance to Bangladesh since its independence, and our annual assistance programs average \$100 million. Last year, immediately after Cyclone Sidr, we provided \$19.5 million in emergency assistance and logistical support to get desperately needed emergency supplies to the devastated areas. Operation Sea Angel II helped saved lives and demonstrated once again the strong and productive ties between our two nations. We will continue to work with the Government of Bangladesh and Bangladeshis in a wide variety of fields to advance sustainable development.

The third "D" is what I call "denial of space to terrorists." The people of Bangladesh have been victimized by terrorism in the recent past, and instinctively understand the evils that extremism fosters. Thus, the United States will work closely with the government of Bangladesh to deny space to terrorists. We will work with the Government to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies to fight terrorism and improve control of Bangladesh's borders and ports of entry. We also are partnering with civil society groups who are rejecting the lies of the extremists who seek to sow hatred. We are grateful for Bangladesh's strong partnership with

the United States in the Global War on Terror; strengthening this partnership will be a priority for me during my tenure in Bangladesh.

The United States will work together with Bangladesh to promote democracy, ensure development and deny space to terrorism.

With that, I am ready to take your questions.

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GR/ 2008

Note: A Bangla translation of this article is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: [http:// dhaka.usembassy.gov](http://dhaka.usembassy.gov)